

Carson City dollars still buck slump in value

By Roger Boye

This week's column answers more questions from Chicago Tribune readers.

Q—As part of the government's Carson City silver dollar sale in 1980, I paid \$65 each for coins dated 1883 and \$60 each for the 1884s. What's my investment worth these days?—J.W., Chicago.

A—Not much more. Uncirculated 1883-CC's might fetch as much as \$70, while the 1884-CC's go for about \$65, according to widely used retail price guides. Although the rare coin market remains in a terrible slump, many experts predict improved values in the next several months.

Q—Would you please review the silver statistics for United States half dollars? Aren't there several valuable types worth saving?—T.D., Glenview.

A—Half dollars dated 1964 or earlier contain .36 of an ounce of silver each, and those made between 1965 and 1970 contain .15 of an ounce. After 1970 Uncle Sam produced only two types of halves with silver: specimens dated 1776-1976 and issued in special Bicentennial coin sets [.15 of an ounce of silver per half] and the 1982-dated Washington commemoratives that government workers are selling to collectors this year and next.

Q—While checking some Roosevelt dimes with a magnifying glass, we noticed tiny letters "JS" to the left of the date. A friend says they stand for Joseph Stalin, former Russian ruler. Is that true?—T.K., Lincolnwood.

A—Of course not. They are the initials of John Sinnock, who designed the coin a few months after Franklin Roosevelt's death in 1945.

Q—For a school chemistry experiment, we dissolved a silver dime in acid to measure the amount of metal in the coin. Is it legal to destroy money in this way?—F.G., Alsip.

A—Yes. Under the law you can't alter a coin's size, date or design in an attempt to defraud, but you can do most anything else. By the way, be sure to save the residue from your experiment; the silver is worth about 60 cents at current prices.

Q—Susan B. Anthony dollars are classified as Type I and Type II in some coin advertisements. What's the difference?—J.S., North Riverside.

A—The distinction refers to the "S" mint marks on 1979-dated proof Anthonys. Uncle Sam used two distinct types of mint marks: On Type I dollars, the "S" looks more like a blob; on Type II—much more valuable to collectors—the "S" is clear and distinct.

Incidentally, several hobbyists have discovered two types of "S" mint marks on 1981 proof Anthonys; but the difference in designs isn't as dramatic as on the 1979s, and it's too soon to know if either type will become a hot collectible.